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## Begum Rokeya Day today

STAR REPORT

Begum Rokeya Day will be observed today to commemorate the contribution of Begum Rokeya, a pioneer of Bangladeshi women's education and a social reformer who fought for equal rights for women and men.

The momentous day marks the 144th birth and 92nd death anniversaries of Begum Rokeya.

In observance of the day, the Ministry of Women and Children Affairs will hold programmes, including awarding the "Begum Rokeya Padak" to women for their outstanding contributions to empowering women in the country, reports BSS.

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Kabir counting the money he made by renting out the tukris (baskets) lying around him. He rents out these tukris for Tk 20 each per day to porters who operate at the Karwan Bazar Kitchen Market. He owns around 300-400 such baskets. The photo was taken yesterday.

PHOTO: ANISUR RAHMAN

## ACC must be overhauled

Says Transparency Int'l Bangladesh

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

The Anti-Corruption Commission (ACC) has been undermined by partisan politics and bureaucratic interference since its inception in 2004, said Iftekharuzzaman, executive director of Transparency International Bangladesh (TIB) yesterday.

"Corruption, misconduct, and inequity have further weakened the institution internally, turning it into an ineffectual body. To address this, we must overhaul the ACC through comprehensive and targeted initiatives," he said.

Iftekharuzzaman made these remarks at a human chain held at Manik Mia Avenue, organised by TIB to mark International Anti-Corruption Day on December 9.

While speaking at the event, he said, "One of the primary reasons behind the ACC's degradation was the previous authoritarian regime, which sought to consolidate power through corruption, enjoy impunity and render institutions, including the ACC, ineffective and politically compromised. Overcoming this legacy is imperative."

**We must align ourselves with the youth's demand to instil an anti-corruption ethos across politics, bureaucracy, and society at large.**

**IFTEKHARUZZAMAN**  
Executive director, TIB

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## Foreigners won't be allowed to stay illegally

Says home adviser

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

Foreign nationals will not be allowed to stay or work illegally in Bangladesh, said Home Adviser Lt Gen (ret'd) Jahangir Alam Chowdhury yesterday.

Addressing reporters at the Secretariat after a meeting on law and order during Christmas and New Year's Eve, he emphasised strict enforcement against undocumented foreign workers.

"Many foreigners are alleged to be staying and working illegally. They must regularise their status immediately with proper documentation," said a home ministry circular signed by officials Khuda Baksh Chowdhury and Mohammad Abdul Momen.

It warned of legal action against violators.

When asked about the

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## Shot, blinded, abandoned

Saidul's story mirrors plight of the forgotten heroes of July uprising

SOHRAB HOSSAIN

Saidul Islam, a 25-year-old from Dashmina upazila in Patuakhali, once dreamed of building a stable life for his family. But the light of that dream has been extinguished — both figuratively and literally.

Saidul lost his eyesight and his livelihood after shotgun pellets lodged in his body during a demonstration in Dhaka's Jatrabari.

Like all the martyrs and injured of the July uprising, his story is one of struggle, despair, and the unforgiving consequences of standing up against oppression.

Saidul, the eldest son of Mohammad Mridha, was born into a poor family in Banshbaria village. Unable to afford further education, he migrated to Dhaka, where he earned a modest living as a driver of a battery-run auto-rickshaw.

Life was hard, but Saidul managed to provide for his wife, Panna Akhter, and their one-and-a-half-year-old daughter, Sumaiya.

But everything changed on August 5.

Saidul, compelled by his desire



**Blinded and impoverished after being struck by over 50 shotgun pellets during a protest, Saidul Islam lost not only his vision but also his livelihood, and his hope for a better future, leaving him in desperate need of support.**

for change, joined the anti-government protests aimed at toppling Sheikh Hasina's regime. During the protests in Jatrabari, he was struck by over 50 pellets when police opened fire. His left eye was completely blinded, and splinters

remain embedded in other parts of his body to this day.

He spent two weeks in hospitals — the Dhaka Medical College Hospital and the National Institute of Ophthalmology — undergoing surgeries and treatment. However, despite these efforts, his vision could not be saved, leaving him permanently blind in one eye and struggling with excruciating pain.

**LIFE AFTER PROTESTS**

Upon his release, Saidul's life began to unravel further.

Unable to work, he returned to Banshbaria to live with his ageing parents. Poverty tightened its grip on his already struggling family.

The final blow came last Thursday when his wife divorced him, taking their young daughter with her. "I have no income and can't provide for my family. My wife couldn't bear it anymore," Saidul said.

"I am living a miserable life. The pain from the splinters is unbearable, and my blindness has taken away my independence," he added, in tears.

**FUTURE CALLS FOR ASSISTANCE**

Saidul says he has applied to

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## Indian foreign secy's visit to bolster ties

Says chief adviser's press wing

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

Chief Adviser's Press Secretary Shafiqul Alam yesterday expressed hope that Indian Foreign Secretary Vikram Misri's visit would strengthen Bangladesh-India relations.

Speaking at the Foreign Service Academy, he said, "We aim to elevate our bilateral ties to benefit the people of both nations. At the same time, we want fair, equal, and dignified relations with India."

He emphasised the shared historical, cultural, and linguistic bonds between the neighbours, alongside their mutual reliance on transboundary rivers.

The visit, set to include foreign office consultations led by

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## Revive Saarc for regional prosperity

Says foreign adviser

DIPLOMATIC CORRESPONDENT

Foreign Adviser Touhid Hossain has called on Saarc nations to overcome conflicts and work towards a prosperous and peaceful South Asia.

Speaking at a seminar marking the 40th Saarc Charter Day at Jatiya Press Club yesterday, Hossain stressed the need to revitalise the organisation, which has been inactive for a decade.

"SAARC's dormancy affects all members. Chief Adviser Prof Muhammad Yunus is committed to reviving the bloc and has discussed the matter with Pakistan's Prime Minister Shabbaz Sharif, who responded positively," he said, expressing hope for a high-level meeting to resume the Saarc Summit.

Highlighting the region's meagre 2 percent

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## 5 CASES AGAINST YUNUS SC upholds HC verdict to scrap all proceedings

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

The Appellate Division of the Supreme Court yesterday upheld the High Court verdicts that scrapped all the proceedings of five cases filed against Nobel Laureate Professor Muhammad Yunus, now the chief adviser to the interim government.

The cases were filed under the Labour Act in 2019 on charges of illegally terminating some workers of Grameen Telecommunications as Prof Yunus was the chairman of the organisation at that time.

Yesterday, a three-member bench of the Appellate Division headed by Justice Md Ashfaqul Islam dismissed five separate leave-to-appeal petitions filed by the state challenging the HC verdicts on October 24 that had scrapped all proceedings of the five cases after hearing five petitions filed by Prof Yunus challenging the legality of filing the cases.

Barrister Mustafizur Rahman Khan appeared for Prof Yunus, while Additional Attorney General Aneek R Haque represented the state during the hearing yesterday.

## Battling bias at every step, a hijra entrepreneur turning pain into purpose

NILIMA JAHAN

Life has never been easy for Avaa Muskan Tithi. However, a fateful day in 2022 made things worse.

During her nursing internship at Suhrawardy Hospital in Dhaka, as she entered a ward, a patient noticed her hijra identity.

He started shouting, "Hijras kill people with injections." He demanded Tithi be removed from there.

That moment was not just humiliating; it was an awakening for Tithi, forcing her to rethink her future in the service sector.

"Will I ever be accepted for who I truly am?" she wondered.

Meanwhile, she was forced to leave her family during the training, as her father couldn't accept her identity.

Yet, Tithi channelled her pain



into purpose. Drawing on the artistic and sewing skills she inherited from her mother, she launched her own business, creating a Facebook page called "Chondrolota."

With just Tk 2,000 and two saris, she stepped into the world of entrepreneurship.

However, the journey has been anything but smooth,

with countless obstacles — no financial safety nets, no institutional support, no access to traditional loans, and no opportunities for professional training.

For her, this endeavour is not just about business; it's about asserting her right in the unjust world.

Currently, Tithi sells a variety of handcrafted items online and offline, including patchwork bags, tote bags, upcycled bags,

patchwork saris, hand-stitched saris, block-printed saris, and handmade jewellery.

She has recently focused on participating in fairs to showcase her products, as she lacks the necessary funds for online promotion and operations.

"Funding has always been a significant hurdle for me," Tithi shared. "I'm unsure where to seek loans for my business, what the eligibility requirements are, or whether I even qualify for them."

She received two small grants from Bandhu Social Welfare Society, an organisation dedicated to the welfare of hijras and marginalised communities.

"I had to buy a sewing machine, leaving me with little for other supplies. I can't introduce new products to keep the business going, as I'm worried about incurring losses. I also lack the funds for online promotions."

Participating in offline

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## 10-TRUCK CASE HC restarts hearing on appeals

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

The High Court yesterday restarted hearing arguments on the death references and appeals in the sensational 10-truck arms haul case in Chattogram.

Deputy Attorney General Sultana Akter Rubi presented the allegations brought against the convicted accused in the case before the HC bench of Justice Mustafa Zaman Islam and Justice Nasreen Akter.

Shishir Manir was present as a defence counsel for the convicts.

Earlier on November 5, the bench began hearing on the death references and appeals.

In 2014, a Chattogram court handed down death penalty to 14 people in the case.

Later, 12 of the convicts filed appeals with the HC.



**Nurul H Khan**  
(1935 - 2020)

**Always in our hearts**  
The family